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## U.S. House of Representatives

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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515

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March 18, 2004

Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

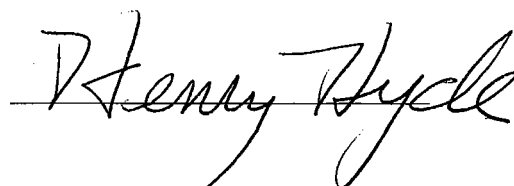
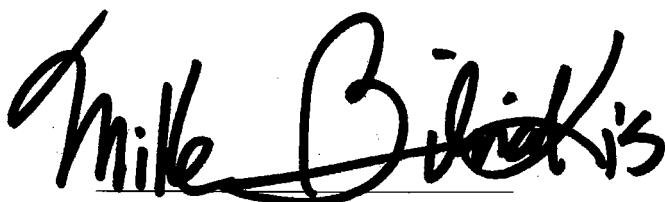
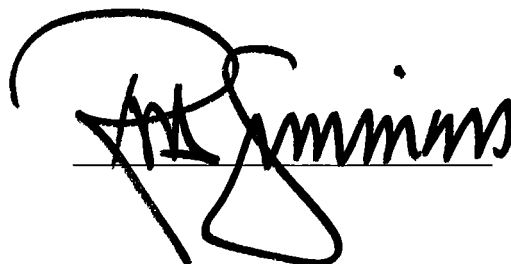
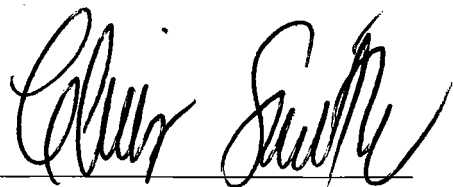
We are writing to urge that the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution brought to the House floor contain funding sufficient to maintain the current level of services for veterans' health care. At a minimum, the level must be at least as high as that approved by the Senate on March 11, 2004. Currently, the House Budget Committee budget resolution for fiscal year 2005 is almost \$750 million less than that approved by the Senate for this budget function.

Last week, the Senate approved an amendment offered by Senator Murkowski to increase funding for veterans medical care by an additional \$1.2 billion over the level contained in the Senate Budget Committee's mark. With approval of the Murkowski amendment and Senate approval of the budget resolution (S.Con.Res. 95), discretionary funding for veterans programs (Function 700) in FY 2005 would rise to \$31.729 billion, an increase of \$2.5 billion over the FY 2004 level of \$29.252 billion.

With over five million enrolled veterans expected to seek medical care at VA facilities next year, the Senate increase of \$2.5 billion in discretionary funding represents the minimum amount needed to maintain current services for enrolled veterans. Funding below this level could result in the imposition of higher copayments and rationing of health care services, leading to long waiting times or other equally unacceptable reductions in services to veterans.

We urge you to ensure that the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution brought to the House floor contain a discretionary funding level for veterans programs and services at least as high as that approved by the Senate.

Respectfully,



Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
March 18, 2004

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Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
March 18, 2004

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